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THE PILGRIMAGE.

O THOU, to whom my yearning soul I send
Of fuller knowledge of Thy truth in quest;
O Thou, to whom my knees in prayer I bend
To ask an understanding which gives rest
And peace unto an anxious, waiting heart;
O answer! is there purpose for my being?
Is need in this world's struggle for my part?
Some task for me there must be in this strife,
To lift me from the dust from whence I came;
Else why did Thy commandment give me life,
To struggle, suffer, yet to glorify Thy name?
My being craves assurance that there be
Some end, some lasting good to crown my strife,
I dare not ask that end or good to see,
But yearn to know that purpose guides my life.

When I recall the struggles of mankind,
The bitter wrongs, the evils that endure,
Doubts if indeed Thou art, steal o'er my mind,
For how can evil come from one all pure?
The years thus make my constant doubting grow,
As chaos and confusion they present;
In them no order seems, that I may know
By purpose, not by chance, man's life is bent.
Man comes into this realm of pain and tears,
His soul unasked if it desireth birth,
A way he seeks, midst many doubts and fears,

To fill his days with meaning on this earth;
He gains a goal, only to find at length
That what he sought is but an empty spoil;
Again he starts, renews his waning strength,
Tries even greater tasks, takes up new toil.
He finds his efforts vain, his struggles bare,
As on he journeys o'er life's thorny way,
And oftentimes in despair he breathes a prayer,
And pleads with Thee that Thou wilt end his stay—
Yet fears Thy answer, for he may not know
What mystery shall lie behind death's pall;
Thus, each of us shrinks from that unseen foe,
And ponders where his next dread blow may fall.

Death takes the ones whom most we need and love,
Who bring us joy and lessen all our ill,
And while we pray that we may meet above,
We do not know, we can not know we will.
There is so much our souls desire to do,
Yet little is the part that may be done,
Of all our dreams, we may but strive for few,
When death shall come, and leave those half begun.
Then will what little good we leave behind
Soon vanish, as in Spring the Winter's snow,
No sign of all our strivings will men find,
Nor trace of us will they who follow know.
Is't true then, life is but a shooting star,
Which burns with brilliance in a moment's flight
And then is gone, and leaves no trace nor sign,
As quickly lost to memory as to sight?

If Thou wilt teach me there a purpose be,
That every life has meaning in Thy sight,
Then willing, happy, will my spirit be,
No longer need I struggle in black night;

Though dark the way, and perils me beset,
Though grief and death assail me on all sides,
Strong shall I be once more the task to seek,
For which my spirit on this sphere abides.

In search of truth, I pilgrim far from home,
O'er mountain and through valley, day and night,
Still waiting for Thy token will I roam,
Nor rest will know until I see Thy light.
My journey brings me to a dizzy height,
I gaze into a canyon far below,
About me on all sides great mountains rise,
Upon whose lofty crests bright gleams the snow.
In shadowed depths a rushing torrent flows,
Down gulleys deep, with echoing roar, it falls;
'Mid castled crags the stately eagle flies,
And to its mate, with piercing cry, it calls.
All these, the bracing wind, the forest green,
The sky, the golden sun, which here combine
To make the glory of this wondrous scene,
Reveal to me Thy truth through works divine.
Then sets the sun, the darkness closes 'round,
The canyon's depth has disappeared from sight,
With eagle's scream no more the rocks resound,
But quiet reigns, and peace and pale moonlight;
The brilliant stars in myriads deck the sky,
And gleam as beacon lights of hope and cheer,
They blazon forth that Thou didst hear my cry
And bid my soul find peace, since Thou art near.
With thoughtful heart I lay me down to rest,
Beneath the stars whose light now fitful glows,
Once more I see the mountain's snow-clad crest,
And then in soothing sleep my eyelids close.

But, lighting slumber, comes an angel form,
A wondrous vision, radiant and bright,

Who speaks: "Thou pilgrim, who the truth wouldst seek,
Lo! I am sent to show the longed-for light.
Thou wouldst have meaning of man's life revealed,
Thou wouldst know if man's strivings count for aught,
Thou prayest that life's secret be unsealed,
God bids me answer what thy soul has sought.
With wonder thou didst view that scene by day,
With awe didst gaze upon the stars by night,
And now I ask, Did they themselves create
And merge themselves into that scene so bright?
The order which the universe makes plain,
That order which each human soul must see,
Is token sure, which may not be denied,
That somewhere a great Master holds the key.
Are not the earthly tools that man doth make,
Created by him for a purpose known?
Why then should water, earth, the heavens above,
All nature's gifts, be accidents alone?
They are the tools that He who rules the earth
Has made for lofty purpose of His own;
Placed in the hands of man at the world's birth,
They are the means through which His will is shown,
And since all things in nature purpose show,
Canst thou then think the Maker's highest art,
Man, who, supreme of all creation stands,
In God's great scheme plays yet a lesser part?
Man, who o'er all the sole dominion hath,
Who harnesses great nature by that right,
Who tunnels mighty mountains for his path,
And alters rivers' courses by his might,
To whom the gift of conscience has been lent,
Who, through that power, the good and true may choose,
The evil shun and wickedness resent,
And life exalt or, brute-like, may abuse.
Canst thou believe that man, creation's king,

The ruler of whatever is on earth,
Was placed thereon to live his few short hours,
And have no ordered purpose for his birth?

“This much in answer to thy prayer is sent,
But if thou further light wouldst have me give,
And teach thee how thine efforts should be bent,
I will direct thee how on earth to live—
To live, that when at last thy time is come
To bid farewell to all and then depart,
Thou mayest be at peace, and rest content,
And know for purpose thou didst play thy part.
Up to the best within thee, day by day,
Live every moment and through every hour,
And that the best grow greater shalt thou pray,
And strive thy soul shall blossom like a flower.
Where wrong exists and where oppression reigns,
Be thine the task that evil to allay,
And by the truth, as truth thou mayest see,
Be guided, and despair not in the fray.
If all the odds against thee may seem cast,
And if of striving thou mayst weary grow,
Still shalt thou smile, still must thy battle last,
Though thou be crushed, and hope no more dost know.
Let every spirit whom thou mayest meet,
Be strengthened and be bettered by thy soul,
That, leaving thee, he may ennobled be,
And better fitted to attain his goal.
If thus thou livest, thou shalt be assured
That what is asked of thee has been attained,
The final end is not for thee to know,
Sufficient be the truth that thou hast gained.”

Sublimely then the radiant angel smiled,
And slowly faded from my eager sight,

The sound of singing birds breaks through my dream,
And I am wakened by the morning light.
I see the snowy mountains gleaming clear,
And watch the fleecy clouds drift in the sky,
I feel the sweeping wind against my cheek,
As joyous, happy, on my couch I lie.
For peace at last hath come unto my breast,
And I have gained the wisdom that I sought,
No more shall doubts and fears my soul perplex,
Content am I with what my vision brought.
My way in life now clear before me lies;
Thy glorious token strong has made my soul
To bear with courage all that life may bring,
As on I struggle toward the distant goal.

EMANUEL GEORGE FRANK.

DETROIT, MICH.